



NEWS RELEASE

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CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

ST. PAUL, MN, January 14, 2010-NRCS continues to work with applicants in the pilot Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) sign-up. In the 2008 Farm Bill, congress retooled CSP making across the board in an attempt to create a more expansive conservation program. The changes included everything from a name change; CSP was formerly called the Conservation Security Program, to accepting applications from all eligible participants instead of specific designated watersheds.

"NRCS in Minnesota is very excited about the CSP program," said Jennifer Heglund Acting State Conservationist for MN NRCS.

In the initial Stewardship sign-up period, which ran from early August to the end of September, over 1750 Minnesota farm operators submitted a program application. From those applicants, over 1200 producers completed the Stewardship sign-up process which includes an extensive evaluation and interview of their current and intended conservation activities. Since early January NRCS has been working with the highest ranked 843 applicants to verify their evaluated score and, when confirmed, develop 5-year contracts.

The national CSP goal is to annually enroll approximately 12.7 million acres into the program throughout the duration of the current Farm Bill. Each state has been given a CSP acreage allocation based on the proportional amount of their eligible lands.

Minnesota's CSP acre allocation was 372,744 acres of ag-lands and 34,909 acres of forestland. Approved applicants will immediately begin to implement the conservation actions associated with their contracts. The first of these contract's annual payments, totaling \$9.6 million, will be made later this fall.

CSP payments are determined for each land use on a conservation performance basis and are not dependent on the successful implementation of specific conservation actions.

CSP payments to a person or legal entity may not exceed \$40,000 in any year, and \$200,000 during any 5-year period. Each CSP contract will be limited to \$200,000 over the term of the initial contract period. Applications will be accepted on a continuous basis and will be annually evaluated for funding at the time of an announced application period.

For more information about CSP in Minnesota, please visit:
<http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp2/index.html> or your local NRCS Field Office.

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